



# The Octagon

Severna Park United Methodist Church News

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## State of the Church Pressing On and Come & See

With the President about to deliver the State of Union Address this coming week (an annual tradition around this time of year), I thought it would be good to do something similar for our congregation. So, on the last Sunday of January, I gave my own “State of the Church” sermon to help us assess where we are on our long road to recovery as a congregation coming through the Covid-19 pandemic.

I began by taking a look back at 2022 and sharing the good news that slowly but surely, we are seeing members and long-time friends return to our church. Our attendance for the last quarter of the year was at about 60% of our pre-pandemic numbers (on the higher side of what churches are experiencing overall) and you can feel the renewed energy on Sunday mornings. We also had 30 new people join our congregation along with 15 Confirmands who became full members.

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The new reality, though, is that while people are coming back, they are attending worship less frequently – people’s habits have simply changed – and that’s a pattern that was happening pre-2020 but like so many other things, got accelerated by the Covid disruption. There were many other signs of recovery and life, as well. In 2022 we were able to re-engage with some of our most important outreach ministries that had been put on hold for the previous two years: we sent youth & college students to ASP for the 40th summer, pulled off the huge Fall Missions Garage Sale with the help of long-timers and newcomers, sent out a VIM/ASP team to Tennessee and hosted guests at our church for Winter Relief. Participation in Sunday School, youth group, choir, classes and small groups has also grown. And on Christmas Eve it felt like “the good ol’ days” as we scurried to set up chairs for our overflowing 4pm Family Service where we had over 400 people attend; overall we had 900+ people worship with us on Christmas Eve compared with a little less than 600 in 2021.

On the financial front, you all rallied with your giving in the last two months of the year and we finished with a “surplus” of \$40K (compared with \$1K in 2021). That’s worth celebrating but it’s also important to recall that the prior two year’s “surpluses” were only made possible by the presence of the \$156K PPP grant we had each year (about 11% of our budget) designed to help small businesses and non-profits retain staff (it worked!). In 2023 that will go away so it will take more of us giving (something we are projecting) and all of us giving more (something we are hoping for) to bridge that gap.

As we look to this new year, the key phrases I lifted up for us from the scriptures that morning (Philippians 3:12-17 & John 1:35-46) are Pressing On and Come and See. We have a lot of work left to do to regain our full strength which will require all of us, like long distance runners, to “press on for the prize of the upward call in Christ Jesus” as Paul says. There is so much to celebrate but there is no time to let up! And it will take all of us adopting a posture and creating a culture of Come and See as we intentionally and persistently welcome people back and welcome new people into our congregation. Won’t you join me in this important work?

Be God's, *Rev Ron*



# COME GROW WITH US THIS LENT

## In Classes & Groups

### *Jesus In The Wild*

**Monday Nights, 7pm** with Rev. Narae  
**Friday Mornings, 10am** with Rev. Lee (hybrid)  
 Author Dan Wilt offers an in-depth look at the remarkable scene in Luke 4:1-14 where Jesus was challenged in the “wild” and unruly wilderness. This forty day journey is written in daily devotion form and will help participants both understand how and why Jesus faced the accuser and become equipped to face their own daily challenges as a follower of his. Books are \$15.

### *Movie ReViews*

#### **Finding Hope & Redemption in Films**

**Wednesday Nights, 7pm** with Rev. Ron

Join us for a fun, fascinating and interactive class where we’ll see clips from contemporary films (*Chocolat, Gran Torino, Les Miserables, Get Low* and others) and talk about spiritual themes like grace, forgiveness and redemption. Popcorn provided!

### *The Lives We Actually Have*

We are looking into a 3rd class option using Kate Bowler & Jessica Richie’s new book, *The Lives We Actually Have*, and will keep you posted as final plans come into focus.

*If you need childcare to be able to participate in a class, please email Erica more than a week prior to the first session and we’ll work on making that available.*

*ebenjamin@severnarkumc.org*

Our theme for Lent this year is *ReLent* and we will spend the season re-orienting and re-newing our spiritual lives together. We invite you to take advantage of the multi-layered way we will be exploring the process of self-surrender to God in worship, study and personal devotion.

## In Worship

Ash Wednesday	<i>Repent</i>
February 26	<i>Recalibrate</i>
March 5	<i>Respite</i>
March 12	<i>Return</i>
March 19	<i>Repurpose</i>
March 26	<i>Rebel</i>

## Holy Week & Easter

Palm Sunday	<i>Rejoice &amp; Reject</i>
Maundy Thursday	<i>Remember</i>
Good Friday	<i>Redeem</i>
Easter Sunday	<i>Resurrect</i>

## Through Daily Devotions

- ◆ Our Pastors & Staff will offer brief daily video devotions each day at noon on Facebook.
- ◆ Go onto our RE-Lent page and download a PDF of Kate Bowler’s *The Lent We Actually Have*
- ◆ Stop by the Welcome Desk for several different Lent devotionals for sale including the book from Rev. Lee & Rev. Narae’s class, *Jesus in the Wild* which can be read on its own.

## YOUTH NEWS

### UMYF Upcoming Schedule

**February 5, 7:00 pm -**

Annual Guy/Girl Face Off

**8:35 pm - ICUs**

**February 12:**

SOUPER BOWL OF CARING in the morning NO meeting in the evening

**February 17-18:**

Lock-In! Information available at MYF

**February 19, 7:00 pm -**

Groupbuilding (Recovery) Night

**8:35 pm - ICUs**

**February 26: 7:00 pm -**

Program: Handling Stress and Anxiety

**8:35 pm - ICUs**

### SUPER SIXTH in February

**February 5, 5:00 pm -**

Group building games and activities, Valentine games and treats

**February 19, 5:00pm -**

Minute to Win It games

### Souper Bowl of Caring

While most of us eat way too much for Super Bowl celebrations, many will go without even a bowl of soup. Our Annual Souper Bowl of Caring will take place on Super Bowl **Sunday, February 12**. Come ready to support our youth by making a donation in the pot or online as they raise money to aid local food initiatives, SPAN and Heaven's Kitchen. [severnaparkumc.org/give](http://severnaparkumc.org/give)

### ASP First Meeting

**Wednesday, February 15, 7:00 pm**

Plans for our week with the Appalachia Service Project are beginning. Dates are **July 1-8, 2023**. ASP is a home repair and relational ministry with and for the poor of Central Appalachia. It is mainly for high school and college youth. Adults are needed to go along, especially if you have construction skills and/or seek to be compassionate to those living in poverty. You have to love youth as well, and be willing to help with humor and faith. If interested, come on the 15th and/or talk to Rev. Lee. [lferrell@severnaparkumc.org](mailto:lferrell@severnaparkumc.org)

### Mentors Needed for Confirmands

Mentors are needed for 2023 Confirmands. We are looking for interested, faithful, caring adults who would be willing to mentor one of our 2023 confirmands. A mentor is a person who is willing to support, encourage, and guide a younger person in a specific area. In our case, that area is...church and faith! If you agree, you would be expected to stay in touch with your confirmand through these next 4 months: checking in with them, forming a friendly bond, encouraging them as they prepare for church membership. You do not need to have all the answers, but just be willing to present church as a wonderful thing! Much more information is available. If interested, please contact Rev. Lee at [lferrell@severnaparkumc.org](mailto:lferrell@severnaparkumc.org), or text at 410-562-9811.

### ASP Talent-Service Auction

Save the date for the annual **ASP TALENT-SERVICE AUCTION** which will take place on **Sunday, March 26 at 6:00 pm**. More information to follow.

### Contact a College Student

February is our month to try to reach all of our college students with a greeting from their church family. You don't need to know the student, but just be willing to reach out. This usually involves sending a note, card, or small care package...all of which are appreciated by these kids. If you would be willing to help us out, take a name and address from the board in Fellowship Hall and when convenient, send something. It will bring great joy, we assure you!

If you as a college student, or as a parent, feel we might not have your current address, please send it along to Rev. Lee at [lferrell@severnaparkumc.org](mailto:lferrell@severnaparkumc.org) Thank you in advance!



### Congratulations, Chris Nunn!

#### *Cross Country Runner of the Year*

We celebrate with high school senior **Chris Nunn** who was recently named "Cross Country Runner of the Year" by the Capital Gazette newspaper. Chris really stepped up and stepped in to a leadership role with the SPSHS boys cross country team this past fall.

Chris won the 4A East Regional in November, and placed fourth in the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association Class 4A championship meet.

Just as outstanding is the way Chris became a leader and motivator for his team, helping to lead them to their third straight state title. Chris is a calm and focused leader, encouraging his teammates and helping them be the best they can be. Coach Josh Alcombright said of Chris, "He doesn't need to say much. He soaks up a lot of knowledge...He did very well...when the opportunity to lead the team came up, Chris came up huge." Chris has worked extremely hard to become the runner he is. This past fall "I was getting faster, like I should be and workouts were going well. Everything just felt comfortable."

Chris is the oldest child of Mike and Stephanie Nunn. Besides running, Chris is active here at SPUMC, serving as a vice-president and leader of one of our MYF small (ICU) groups. He hopes to go on his first trip with ASP this coming summer. Chris will enter Virginia Tech in the fall. Everyone loves Chris. He is faithful, friendly to all, and still humble. We are so happy for this accomplishment!

### Shout Outs Also Go To:

- ◆ **Senior Alex Lecouras** who was also named to the CG's All-County team. Alex finished fifth at the AA County championship and 13th at the Class 4A state meet. He is the middle child of Alexis and Amy Lecouras, and has his eye on the US Naval Academy.
- ◆ **Caden Lazzor** who was named Second Team All-County as a sophomore. Caden is the oldest child of Megan and Andrew Lazzor. He is also active in MYF and is part of the leadership program at the high school.

## SPAN Gets a Facelift!

Thanks to a great response from our congregation and VIM team, we had 22 volunteers spread over MLK weekend, January 14 and 16th, to paint the downstairs at SPAN except the Kitchen which we remodeled a few years ago. Because of the strong turnout we also had the time to do the hallway heading upstairs to where they store food.

The leadership and volunteers at SPAN were very grateful for the refreshing of their ministry center. No one at SPAN could remember the last time they had fresh paint. It makes the space much more welcoming and brighter. The job was well done and looks great. Stop by and check it out – and while you're there, bring a donation too!

At the conclusion we replaced everything so they could be back serving the community on Tuesday. A couple of us went back Tuesday morning to make sure everything was in fact operational and put back in place properly! Our days of service were successful and many thanks to all the volunteers.



## GOOD VIBES ONLY VBS 2023

July 24-28, 2023 1:00-4:00

### Mega Sports Camp

*Good Vibes Only* is a popular expression with kids, and athletes often use it to describe the positive influence they want to exert and surround themselves with. But kids at your MEGA Sports Camp VBS will discover **Good Vibes Only** means they can have a positive influence on others because their confidence comes from God. By the grace of God, kids are *Valuable, Influential, Brave, Encouraging, and Selfless!*

When you sign up for VBS you will pick a track for your child to follow throughout the week. Kids entering PreK 4 years old, Kindergarten, and 1st Graders will all participate in sports basics. Kids entering 2nd-5th Graders will have the choice of signing up for various sports and activities based on our volunteer coaches. These might be soccer, basketball, volleyball, cheerleading, broadcast journalism, cooking, and arts & crafts. If you would like to volunteer to coach please let Erica know.

**As of February 1**, we need sports basics and basketball coaches. Volunteer coaches can split the week.

Registration will begin on **March 1st at 10:00am** for church members and **March 6th at 10:00am** for community members. Volunteers will receive an email with a registration link in mid-February. To volunteer please contact Erica Benjamin.

Stay up-to-date on all things VBS  
[www.severnaparkumc.org/vbs](http://www.severnaparkumc.org/vbs)  
[ebenjamin@severnaparkumc.org](mailto:ebenjamin@severnaparkumc.org)



## February Communion Offering

SPAN is experiencing an increased need for financial donations to assist people in the area who are about to lose their housing because of inability to pay the month's rent. Others can't pay to keep the heat on in their apartment or house. Many have lost their jobs, and others have experienced serious medical issues that have prevented them from working.

The February communion offering will be given to SPAN to assist in its mission of providing emergency assistance to those in our area threatened with immediate loss of housing or heat. SPAN's policy is to help clients financially only once a year, but the need is still great, and is continuing to grow. If you are able, please give generously to support SPAN's mission in church or online. And if you need help personally, SPAN is open **Monday through Thursday from 10:00 to 1:30**.

Current pantry shortages include: tomato products (including sauce, paste, and tomato main dishes like Ravioli) as well as Baked Beans.

## Mid-Year School Supplies Drive

We are once again collecting school supplies for the Brooklyn Park and Park Elementary Schools. Your help in donating these supplies is greatly appreciated by the teachers and students at these schools! Items needed include paper towels, zip bags (quart & half gallon), tissues, pencils, crayons, colored pencils, whiteboard markers, sketch pads, glue sticks, kids' scissors & notebook paper.

You may drop any of these in the bin by the Welcome Desk up through **February 20th** with delivery taking place on the 21st. Thanks so much for your continued generosity.

## Living Well Multiplies Blessings

*SPUMC provides game changing donations to organizations that benefit Women and Refugees!*

For those of you who have been around SPUMC for a while, you will recall Living Well on Wilkens, a mission initiated by Rev. Nicole Houston back in 2013 and lovingly supported by so many. LWOW involved the renovation and subsequent purchase of a home on Wilkens Avenue in Baltimore which served as a Hospitality Day Center for sex trafficking victims. Unfortunately, for many reasons, this ministry was not sustainable so a decision was made to pivot to working with the International Rescue Commission to house fully vetted refugees in the home. We were weeks away from having guests move in but the timing was not right as US policy shifted and the number of legal refugees entering the US was greatly reduced. In 2020, the Living Well on Wilkens board members made the difficult decision to sell the property, and asked the Mission Committee in 2022 to distribute the proceeds to missions benefitting Women (particularly victims of sexual or domestic exploitation and abuse) and Refugees who are seeking asylum in the US.

A small group from Missions volunteered to spearhead the process for finding organizations where we would have the greatest impact, mostly local (or UMC affiliated internationally), while meeting the requirement to benefit Women or Refugees. A grant application process was designed to give all organizations an equal chance to benefit from the proceeds, while also holding organizations accountable. All Missions Committee and Church Council members were invited to send the application to any qualified organization, and there were at least 20 organizations contacted.

We received 10 applications and after much discussion, prayer and discernment, the proposed awards were recently approved by the Mission Committee and the Church Council. The awards totaling \$45,000 are:

**\$2,500** – The Samaritan Women/Institute for Shelter Care – in Honor of Rev. Nicole (Donation to the Scholarship Fund)

**\$7,500** – ERICA (Episcopal Refugee & Immigrant Center) – provides funds to Afghan refugees for college education partnership with Towson, UMBC, Goucher and Notre Dame of MD

**\$7,000** – Capitol Hill United Methodist Church – shelter and clothing for newly arrived asylum seekers entering Washington, DC in recent months

**\$7,000** – Kenya Connect – a Baltimore based organization that provides education for teenagers in Kenya to prevent sexual exploitation and young marriages, supporting 62 schools

**\$7,000** – Annapolis Immigration Justice Network – works with local lawyers with reduced fees to help asylum seekers pay for legal services resulting in US citizenship

**\$5,000** – Sierra Leone Education Fund – an SPUMC ministry that will provide college funds to 4 recent female high school graduates in Sierra Leone; this ministry is affiliated with the UMC Church.

**\$3,500** – Hope for All provides local shelter services to women and victims of domestic violence

**\$2,500** – YWCA of Annapolis – Helps survivors of sexual violence and domestic abuse

**\$1,000** – LIRS (Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services) – Job support to MD asylum seekers

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**\$1,000** – Just Neighbors Ministry – UMC Affiliated ministry providing legal services

**\$1,000** – Friendship Beyond Borders – startup organization providing IT equipment in Syria Thanks to the Mission Committee and the subcommittee (*Jennifer Pilholski, Leslie Wexler-Williams, Becky Clapp and Rev. Narae*) for overseeing the grant application process. We are so happy that the proceeds from Living Well on Wilkens will benefit so many deserving missions!

## Early Risers Are Back

**Beginning Feb. 26th** The Early Risers Choir will start rehearsing in the choir room **after the 8:00 am service for 30 minutes on the last Sunday of each month.** The group will sing in worship on the 1st Sunday of each month.

## Baptism Class

Planning to have a child baptized soon? You are invited to attend a one-time Baptism Class on **Sunday, February 12 at 10:45am** in the Parlor. RSVP Beth. [bfrank@severnaparkumc.org](mailto:bfrank@severnaparkumc.org)

## Sacred Worth Group

The Sacred Worth Group is a safe space in our congregation for LGBTQ+ persons, family members and allies committed to building a more inclusive church. We meet on the **3rd Tuesday** of each month at 7:30pm in the Parlor for conversation and mutual support. **On February 21st**, we'll begin a discussion of the new book by BWC Pastor Rachel Cornwell, *Daring Adventures: Helping Gender Diverse Kids and Their Families Thrive*. For more info or to reserve a copy of the book (\$15), contact Rev. Ron. [ron@severnaparkumc.org](mailto:ron@severnaparkumc.org)

## Faith & Race Group News

In January, the Faith & Race Group welcomed *Rev. Enger Muteteke* as our guest speaker who talked with us about her personal journey in cross-racial and cross-cultural ministries and ways that we can learn from and support one another across our differences.

We will meet on **Tuesday, February 28 at 7pm** in the Parlor to discuss video excerpts from the excellent and engaging Master Class *"Black History, Black Freedom, Black Love."* We'll also pick out a book to read together for our March meeting. Join us!



## ALL Upcoming Events

◆ Don't Fall for It! Join us on **Wednesday, February 22** for a special presentation at 11am (note different time) by Brian Marsh from the Anne Arundel County States Attorney's Office who will discuss frauds and scams that especially target seniors. Lunch will follow. RSVP to Kathie Kamm.

◆ "Sister Act" Bus Trip: On **Wednesday, March 29**, join ALL for a bus trip to the Dutch Apple Dinner Theatre in Lancaster, PA to see "Sister Act." Cost is \$120 per person and includes the buffet luncheon. Departure time is **9:30am** with an approximate return time of **5:30pm**. Make reservations and arrange for payment by **February 20** with Kathie Kamm. 410-647-5914



At their January meeting, Rev. Ron took the Adults Loving Life group on a virtual tour of SPUMC's pilgrimage to Oberammergau and Israel with his presentation, "On Holy Ground in the Holy Land." Participants got to vicariously attend the Passion Play, visit churches and take in beautiful scenery in the Bavarian Alps, journey in the footsteps of Jesus along around the Sea of Galilee, renew baptisms in the Jordan, visit Bethlehem and explore the many holy sites in and around Jerusalem.



## P/T Security Manager Sought

With the passing of our beloved friend and church member, John Harden, we are looking for someone to fill the Part-Time position of Security Manager, in which John served so well for more than twenty years. This is a paid position (\$5,000/year) with security & lock-up duties being performed five nights every week (Sunday night through Thursday night, roughly one hour per night). Please call Dave McKinney in the church office or email him for more info. [dmckinney@severnaparkumc.org](mailto:dmckinney@severnaparkumc.org)

## Open And Close the Building

Could you help lock and unlock the building on weekends? We are looking to add at least one more person to our **Volunteer Weekend Unlock/Lockup Team**. The need is to unlock the church on Sunday morning, and lock up on Friday night, Saturday night and after the last service on Sunday, once every eight weeks. Please call Dave at the church office or email him for more information. [dmckinney@severnaparkumc.org](mailto:dmckinney@severnaparkumc.org)

## Clothes Closet Ministry

The Clothes Closet Ministry is back! Please take a yellow card from the bulletin board in Fellowship Hall with the name of an AHOH guest and their requested item. Return the item in bag or box, with the card attached by **February 19**. Requests will be available the first Sunday of each month.

## Leadership Team Openings

We're looking for a few good men – and women! We have openings on several of our ministry committees (especially Intentional Faith Development and Worship) and would love to talk to you if you're interested in serving in any capacity. Reach out to Rev. Narae or Rev. Ron via email and we'll find a place for you. [nkim@severnaparkumc.org](mailto:nkim@severnaparkumc.org) or [rfoster@severnaparkumc.org](mailto:rfoster@severnaparkumc.org)

## Pew Tenders

Would you be willing to tend our pews several times a year? We'd like to add a few more people to the rotation. For more info, please contact Hope Linehan. [hlineh626@yahoo.com](mailto:hlineh626@yahoo.com)

## Tech Volunteers

Sunday Morning Tech Volunteers are needed to run the slides during services once a month or so. You choose which service time! We would also love to train some more people to help with our Livestream as camera operators or producers. Contact Meg to find out more or to volunteer. [mmoore@severnaparkumc.org](mailto:mmoore@severnaparkumc.org)



## Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper

Join us on **Tuesday, February 21 from 5:30-7:00pm** to support Boy Scout Troop 993 and enjoy pancakes, sausage links, apple sauce and brownie sundaes. Adults \$10, Kids ages 6-12 \$5, and Kids 5 & under are free. It's a super fun family event.



## Ash Wednesday

Begin the season of Lent in worship with us on **Ash Wednesday, February 22 at Noon and 7pm**. If you can't attend either, you can also come by the church to receive the imposition of ashes from one of our pastors from **6:30am to 4pm**.



## Severna Park United Methodist Church

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